

These are comments regarding policies related to the placement of “large footprint” facilities, specifically schools, in the rural area.

I recommend that the policy be that schools that do not overwhelmingly serve the rural area not be allowed to be located in the rural area. This includes those with tight line sewer connections.

The issue is not so much whether tight line sewers can be controlled enough to avoid other connections. Instead, it’s about whether these schools are appropriate in the rural area.

Schools, and other facilities like churches, tend to become “centers” of activity. For schools, activity goes beyond the actual conduct of classes. Sports and meetings are very often held in these facilities. The rural area infrastructure (mostly roads) is not designed for this increase in use.

Schools, tending to be “large footprint”, use land that could otherwise have been used for rural purposes. Once gone, that resource will never be available again.

A good example of this situation is the Issaquah School District purchase of 80-acres of prime pasture land in May Valley at Winterbrook Farms. Their intent is to build two schools and a maintenance facility which will forever change the character of that portion of the valley. This is particularly frustrating when local residents are working to enhance the equine and agricultural aspects of the entire May Valley area, a use highly aligned with the intended rural area land use.

The rural areas are not a land bank for urban land uses, and schools, as long as they are intended to serve urban populations, are using the rural areas in exactly that way.

Schools will claim they will lose money if they can’t develop these parcels. My response is “let the buyer beware”. A great number of private property owners have been effected in the same way already because of land use restrictions intended to preserve and protect rural areas. It seems unfair and highly insensitive for school representatives to expect government to “bail them out” while private property owners are left to deal with the situation.

Urban areas need to have policies to accommodate uses, like schools and churches, within the urban services area.

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